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E-Learning 2.0, Designing Collaborative Learning Experiences to Foster the Shared Development of Knowledge

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Are you ready to integrate the tools and skills of the future? This session will illustrate how easy it is to integrate videoconferencing (using a free web-based application, Skype™) and web-based collaborative writing tools (such as Google Docs) to create collaborative learning experiences and ultimately build students’ capacity to participate in virtual teams. Instructional design principles will be discussed and examples of activities will be shared. Participants will gain a sense of the ways in which video communication can transform their online courses.

Use tools that connect people and make possible business interactions (discussion forums, blogs/microblogs, shared workspaces, video conferencing/virtual meetings, and messaging) and communicate effectively and productively using the tools. Assessment as observed through instructor observation, ability to complete tasks and participate through deliverable
Session Goals:
Practice using powerful social media tools and leverage these tools to increase student engagement in courses conducted both on-site and online.

Use appropriate instructional design solutions
Design innovative and engaging online activities, lessons and projects using low-cost and open-source tools (VoiceThread, Google docs, Twitter, Office Live, Skype, LinkedIn
Identify innovative pedagogical solutions and approaches that foster greater group and team collaboration online

Assessment of Learning
Use formative and summative data to evaluate instruction
Does this sound familiar? It’s the week you roll out the group project in your online course. You’re watching the discussion board and the email trails. In each group, a student cautiously emerges as the discussion leader—you can tell that he or she doesn’t want to appear controlling, but is eager to begin. One or two other students check in and dutifully reach out to the rest of the group, hoping to hear from their partners, but not really invested in the possibility of a reply. Some students don’t jump in at all. And so it goes…

I have been requiring a group project in my online course for about five years now because I recognize the value of collaborative learning experiences. I never felt the assignment was a success. The truth is, I disliked this part of the semester and although I had a rubric—it wasn’t clear to me that the students were learning much from the experience.

After trying the same things over and over and getting the same results, I finally took a step back and put on my instructional designer’s hat. Here is what I discovered: The group projects failed because I simply had not built the students’ capacity for group work. Regardless of where I placed the project within the calendar, I hadn’t given students the chance to build rapport with each other, or with me as the facilitator and key stakeholder. I had provided neither instruction for working in teams nor any practical strategies for exercising communication skills, and the only tools the students had for communicating were a discussion board and email. I asked myself, “In the ‘real world,’ who does an entire project—from initiating to closing, with people they’ve never met—exclusively by email?”
First, I had to clarify my purpose for including a group project. What were the intended outcomes—communication skills? collaboration skills? If this was to be more than just an obligatory group project, if I was going to claim fostering these skills as an outcome, I had to design with a sense of purpose.

At this point, my head was swirling with several ideas. To organize my thoughts, I pulled out my copy of Wiggins and McTighe’s (1998) *Understanding by Design*, and followed their backwards design process: “identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences and instruction”

I had to offer direct instruction and ample opportunity for students to apply the principles in context. Essentially, the project had to be everything that my earlier iterations were not.

To build capacity I had to: build student rapport and minimize the transactional distance between members of the class; offer students guidance for working in groups and teams; and equip students with the technical means to complete the project.
To begin with I had to build their capacity to work collaboratively. If I wanted them to hit the targeted outcomes, I had to provide resources, tools, guidelines, instructions.
Start with collaborative writing tools
Demo of GoogleDocs and sample activities that integrate the tool and content. Building the students capacity in a way that is similar to the slow, deliberate and necessary process of teaching students to use the mouse just 17-20 years ago.
Benefits - Communication and Collaboration skills, Soft Skills, Employability Skills, Team work, Project Based Learning, Student Engagement

Expand collaborative learning

Real time editing, Get feedback easily anytime/anywhere

Stay organized

Monitor student progress via an interactive process
Video conferencing brings students together

Trans Distance refers to the theory of cognitive space between instructors and learners in an educational setting, especially in distance education formulated by Michael Moore [1] at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Moore’s theory was originally part of a theory of independent learning developed in 1972, which appeared in the Handbook of Adult Education as "transactional distance" in 1980. According to Moore, transactional distance is “a psychological and communication space to be crossed, a space of potential misunderstanding between the inputs of instructor and those of the learner”

If learning outcomes in any distance education course are to be maximized, transactional distance needs to be minimized or shortened.
Slide - Example handout provided to students for their first video conference.
Activity - Students create an elevator speech and then arrange a mutually convenient time to meet with their partner. They give their speeches and discuss a content-driven question. Purpose - This exposes students to a communication technique (elevator speech) and tool (skype) and strategies (seven steps). Students debrief the activity in the class discussion board. They have a lot of fun with this. As we do business in the virtual world and leverage video technology this is a good activity to foster professional skills.

It is a different type of experience then skyping with a friend or relative.
Minimize the Transactional Distance with Video Conferencing Tools such as Skype
Connect people across places
Enables dialogue
Promotes community
Enables collaborative work and social learning
Makes possible teamwork

Demo Skype
I envisioned Twitter’s platform as a place to build community by exchanging short, to-the-point information; a place to share ideas and solutions and engage and connect with content. The real-world dialog and resources available through Twitter motivates students to engage in the use of this tool. Instructional strategies will be shared along with evidence of learning and collaboration in action!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o&feature=related Twitter in Plain English
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8D3qYj4Mdaw Twitter as a tool
http://blip.tv/edtechie/twitter-love-song-1373759 Twitter Love Song
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WPVWDkF7U8 Twitter in the Classroom
http://www.slideshare.net/hopkinsdavid/twitter-in-education
Evidence
Collaborative Note-Taking
SOCIAL INTERACTION/COMMUNITY BUILDING

Olivia_x0o @Windows down, music up... beautiful day :)  
October 28, 2010 1:24:19 PM EDT via web

Olivia_x0o @Cryanj10 Hope your friend is okay, and I hope you feel better too... being stressed out sucks. Keep your head up :)  
October 28, 2010 10:54:04 AM EDT via web in reply to Cryanj10

Cryanj10 getting stuff done  
October 28, 2010 10:35:45 AM EDT via web

Cryanj10 trying to get everything done...its tough  
October 28, 2010 10:35:02 AM EDT via web

Cryanj10 my friend is in the hospital its been a tough week  
October 28, 2010 10:34:45 AM EDT via web
ENABLES COLLABORATIVE DIALOGUE

taraamariexo @ really good meeting w my team! monday will be better w the 5.0 :) November 5, 2010 1:12:41 AM EDT via web

MikeSaraiva21 @dietsister Thank you! I just got home from work. I will check everything out asap. November 4, 2010 11:57:13 PM EDT via web in reply to dietsister

dietsister I put the minutes up but the formatting went crazy!! November 4, 2010 10:23:03 PM EDT via web

dietsister @MCCCAP101 Team 5 was great!! I think this is going to be fun!! It was fun to talk to a bunch of people at once. November 4, 2010 10:13:35 PM EDT via web in reply to MCCCAP101

dietsister @MikeSaraiva21 No worries... We know you had to work....All the stuff is on googledocs...you should have access November 4, 2010 10:11:27 PM EDT via web

MissxLili #goodnight
ENCOURAGES RESOURCE SHARING

uCHa920: [Profile Image]
Article explaining the barrier to online communication in the health industry: [Link]
7 May, Favorite, Retweet, Reply

celynch1: [Profile Image]
"To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well" John Marshall "T... (cont)
[Link]
7 May, Favorite, Retweet, Reply
EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

keltpetrie2 @Tavia0226 Octavia did you get my unedited presentation? We should be putting that together next week.
about 13 hours ago via web in reply to Tavia0226

keltpetrie2 I just had to take an assessment for a job and found that what I had learned I could apply to the position 😊
Lovin it :) 
about 13 hours ago via web

keltpetrie2 I just used what I learned in this powerpoint assignment for my final project in my macroeconomics class. I'm so happy right now 😊
about 13 hours ago via web

Tzilla6571 Tyson Glenn
@mistyfaye78 Good article. It's great to see schools adapting there students to the new technology and skills they'll need to use them.
7 May
Provides a place for students to
ENGAGEMENT WITH ACTIVITIES

KarenSheehan2 Karen Sheehan
I'm learning a lot about searching on the web. I just would go onto Google and start searching, now I know how to weed info out.
30 minutes ago Favorite Reply

MerieleStamm Meriele Stamm
easyWhois.com tells you the dates the site was create, specific contact names, and addressed at which the organization is based.
#souseful
2 hours ago
A PLACE TO VENT!

**msarno1980** Here we go blackboard, here we go. Here we go blackboard, here we go! COME ON!
about 1 hour ago via web

**Olivia_x0o** @baconjody Just tried again Blackboard is still down 4 me. Our meeting is t/m @ 7. Did u print the Project eval+notes? Is that what we need?
about 1 hour ago via web in reply to baconjody

**Olivia_x0o** @msarno1980 Blackboard has been down for me for a couple hours now. Just tried again and still won't work. & I agree... I QUIT!
about 1 hour ago via web in reply to msarno1980

**msarno1980** This day just keeps getting better.
about 1 hour ago via web

**msarno1980** I QUIT!!!
about 2 hours ago via web

**msarno1980** Is blackboard down for anybody else? Or am I the only lucky one? If today is a small taste of whats in store for me the rest of the week....
about 2 hours ago via web
Fostering Student Engagement With Twitter

Enables dialogue
Offers an innovative approach to "annotating" texts
Encourages collaborative note-taking
Encourages resource sharing
Offers opportunities for students to practice writing concise messages
Provides a place for students to post questions, comments and reflections
STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION

- Diane DiResta’s - *7 Steps to a Vital Video Conference*
- Joe Landsberger's - *Active Listening: Study Guide and Strategy*
- Sylvia Goodeve’s - *Feedback Sandwich*
- Brad Federman - *15 Tips on Responding to Feedback*
- Pegasus Communications - *Conflict Management*
Elluminate, adobe connect, cisco’s webex
Add logos for wordle, etherpad, diigo
Two targets, several ways to assess: Observation of collaborative learning experiences as posted in the debriefs on the student discussion board; self reflections in individual accounts that students would keep during the team project; and the self-, peer- and team-evaluations that students completed at the end of the projects. I would be looking to see evidence of six to eight situations in which a student identified a communications opportunity and employed a strategy or realized in hindsight that a particular strategy would have better served them. I wasn’t expecting exactitude, but rather that students could demonstrate an ability to call upon strategies that made sense in the situations they encountered.
COURSE PLAN

Week One:
Get ready

Weeks Two and Three:
Introduce
Collaborative
Writing tools

Weeks Four-Six:
Web
conferencing

Week Six/Eight:
Put it all
together
As organizations rely more and more on the virtual team structure, it is imperative that we give students meaningful opportunities to work collaboratively and practice the communications skills they will need to succeed beyond the classroom. By adding rapport-building activities and incorporating twenty-first century tools such as video and social media, I was able to build the student’s capacity for working in teams and subsequently brought my project design into better alignment with what students can expect to encounter in today’s workforce. Students were inspired and took the time to let me know.

1-2 Students reported improvement in specific communication skills as well as command of techniques and strategies for working in groups and teams:

3-5 Students felt empowered in their new mastery of the “real world” social media tools they used to manage the project and there was evidence they felt the experience was worthwhile:
FOR MORE INFORMATION

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“E-Learning 2.0-Collaborative Learning Experiences that Prepare Students to Work in Virtual Teams.” Online Classroom, Magna Publications. (Accepted for publication; expected June 2011).